

DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Down But Not Out, Washington Correctional Institute Weathers Katrina  
*Staff, Inmates United in Effort to Overcome Storm Obstacles***

(Angie, LA) It was back to business as usual Wednesday for staff and inmates at Washington Correctional Institute (WCI). Electricity was restored to the rural state correctional facility late Tuesday afternoon after Hurricane Katrina blew through Washington Parish on August 29<sup>th</sup>, knocking down many of the area's noted pine trees and causing massive power outages and blocking roadways.

WCI Warden James Miller and staff relied on emergency power from generators to run essential needs for the prison. The facility houses approximately 1100 inmates and was also housing inmates evacuated from Plaquemines Parish prior to Katrina making landfall in Louisiana. The water supply was adequate to meet proper hygiene needs of the inmates and for preparing meals in the kitchen and doing laundry.

Approximately 95% of WCI employees suffered some home and/or property damage from Hurricane Katrina, 65% of those suffered significant damage, according to Warden Miller. Despite the circumstances, WCI's dedicated employees showed up for work as scheduled ensuring a safe correctional environment for staff and inmates. Corrections Headquarters in Baton Rouge is coordinating relief efforts for those employees at WCI and elsewhere who were affected by the storm.

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After Katrina's winds subsided, WCI inmate work crews immediately started clearing roadways in the parish so emergency personnel could assess the damage and start working on recovery. WCI staff also assisted local law enforcement in maintaining law and order in the parish in the first few days after the storm. When relief trucks came rolling into Washington Parish, the National Guard and Warden Miller set up a distribution point at the correctional facility. Ice, bottled water, meals-ready-to-eat and other necessities are being distributed at WCI to parish residents daily. Minimum custody work crews are also assisting at other distribution points in the parish.

Communication remains a problem at the facility. Phone lines began working late Wednesday night. Staff has begun the long and difficult task of attempting to locate loved ones of these inmates to determine their location. Approximately 85% of the WCI inmate population is from the devastated areas south of Washington Parish. Normal visitation has resumed to maintain a sense of normalcy for both the staff and inmate population.

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